

## Pastoral Study Grant Awarded to Pastor Keith

The Louisville Institute, a center supporting research and leadership education in American religion, has awarded a Pastoral Study Project Grant for 2015-2016 to Rev. Dr. Keith Ray. The resources of this grant of approximately \$10,000 will be used to enable Pastor Keith to have space and time to work on a specific ministry-related project described below. Funding is also provided for additional clergy support at Clemson United Methodist Church when Pastor Keith is away. The grant will fund four weeks of study leave in 2015 and one week in 2016.

Pastor Keith's project is entitled *Strength for the Journey: Spiritual Care in the Midst of Gruesome Death at the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Approximately 160 persons are found dead in the Arizona desert each year as they attempt to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, migrating from Central America and Mexico. The [Colibrí Center for Human Rights](#) works in cooperation with the medical examiner of Pima County, Arizona to identify the remains of these persons in order that the dead might be reunited with their families in Central America and Mexico.

Pastor Keith's project focuses on the question, "How can spiritual practices and resources be utilized as means of healing and renewal for those who are confronted with the trauma of gruesome desert deaths and who assist the families of those whose loved ones are missing after attempting to migrate to the U.S. through the Sonoran desert?" This project will focus on developing resources for those who work to connect families with the remains of their loved ones. Such work takes a toll on one's spiritual and psychological well-being. The project will allow dedicated time for research on spiritual care for those facing compassion fatigue. The research will culminate in a week of shared experiences in the summer of 2015 with the Colibrí staff and a concluding retreat that utilizes some of the findings of the research.

The tentative schedule for the Pastoral Study Program is as follows:

- One week in March: Pastor Keith away in residence at Emory University for research.
- One week in April: Pastor Keith away in residence at Emory University for research.
- One week in the summer of 2015: Pastor Keith away to engage in collaboration and retreat with the staff team of Colibrí Center for Human Rights.
- One week in September: Pastor Keith away locally to prepare an article for submission.
- One week in January 2016 for follow-up meeting with Colibrí.

During Pastor Keith's absences, Pastor Megan Augustine will serve as the Lead Pastor. Additional clergy support is funded by the grant and we are pleased to announce the Rev. Elise Erikson Barrett, an ordained United Methodist pastor, writer, musician, and speaker, will provide clergy leadership during the grant period. Learn more about Elise at [www.elisebarrett.com](http://www.elisebarrett.com).

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee of Clemson United Methodist Church has approved Pastor Keith's acceptance of the Pastoral Study Grant. United Methodist clergypersons are expected to engage in lifelong learning as a part of their ministry, including time dedicated to continuing education experiences. The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church states:

*1. Throughout their careers, clergy shall engage in continuing education for ministry, professional development, and spiritual formation and growth in order to lead the church in fulfilling the mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ. This shall include carefully developed personal programs of study augmented periodically by involvement in organized educational and spiritual growth activities.*

*2. A clergy member's continuing education and spiritual growth program should include such leaves at least one week each year and at least one month during one year of every quadrennial. Such leaves shall not be considered as part of the minister's vacations and shall be planned in consultation with their charges or other agencies to which they are appointed as well as the bishop, district superintendent, and annual conference continuing education committee.*

The mission of the Louisville Institute is “to support research and leadership education on American religion,...nurture(ing) inquiry and conversation regarding the character, problems, contributions, and prospects of the historic institutions and commitments of American Christianity. In all of its work, the Louisville Institute is guided by its fundamental mission to enrich the religious life of American Christians and to encourage the revitalization of their institutions, by bringing together those who lead religious institutions with those who study them, so that the work of each might inform and strengthen the other.”

Additionally, “As a program funded by Lilly Endowment, the Louisville Institute builds upon the Endowment's long-standing support of both leadership education and scholarly research on American religion, including American Catholicism, American Protestantism, the historic African-American churches, and the Hispanic religious experience.” For more information, visit the Institute's website at [www.louisville-institute.org](http://www.louisville-institute.org).